

60p

THE Unexplained

MYSTERIES OF MIND SPACE & TIME

Blinded by UFOs

Crowley: man and magick

'Eva C' and ectoplasm

The real Robin Hood

Secret graffiti

107



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THE Unexplained

MYSTERIES OF MIND SPACE & TIME

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The victims of a close encounter in Texas in 1980 seemed to be suffering from radiation sickness, adding another disturbing dimension to the **Cash-Landrum case**; meanwhile reports came in from other witnesses of the UFO. Is seeing really believing? **Emilie Sagée's** pupils truly believed they had often seen her double, but doubts arise when the case is seen from a modern psychologist's viewpoint. We present a fresh insight into how the 12 signs of the zodiac came about – graphically and symbolically – over the centuries in our series **Origins of the zodiac**. One refreshingly unorthodox, and effective, psychic healer, is **John Cain** from Liverpool. And lastly, could the phenomena connected with **Electric people** be related to those of poltergeists?

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A terrifying encounter with a flame-belching UFO on a lonely road near Huffman, Texas, resulted in appalling injuries for the three innocent victims. JOHN SCHUESSLER reports on this most bizarre case

LATE ONE CHILLY EVENING at the end of December 1980 two middle-aged women and a young boy were driving along a lonely road in the Huffman area of east Texas, USA. It was the Christmas season and they were in a festive mood. Suddenly a bright light appeared in the sky a little way ahead. A few minutes later the light had turned into a huge diamond-shaped object, shooting out from its underside intermittent bursts of fire. This alarming apparition seemed to be trying to land on the road ahead, making it impossible for the three people in the car to continue on their way.

For the occupants of the car it was to be a terrifying encounter. The intense heat from the UFO burned their skin and the bright light injured their eyes. When the object eventually left the area, a large number of helicopters filled the sky in close pursuit, making a deafening noise that hurt the witnesses' ears.

'A diamond of fire' was how one of the witnesses described the huge glowing object that hovered over the road, blocking their way. Ringed with lights at the centreline, it emitted bursts of fire from its underside that threatened to set light to the surrounding forest

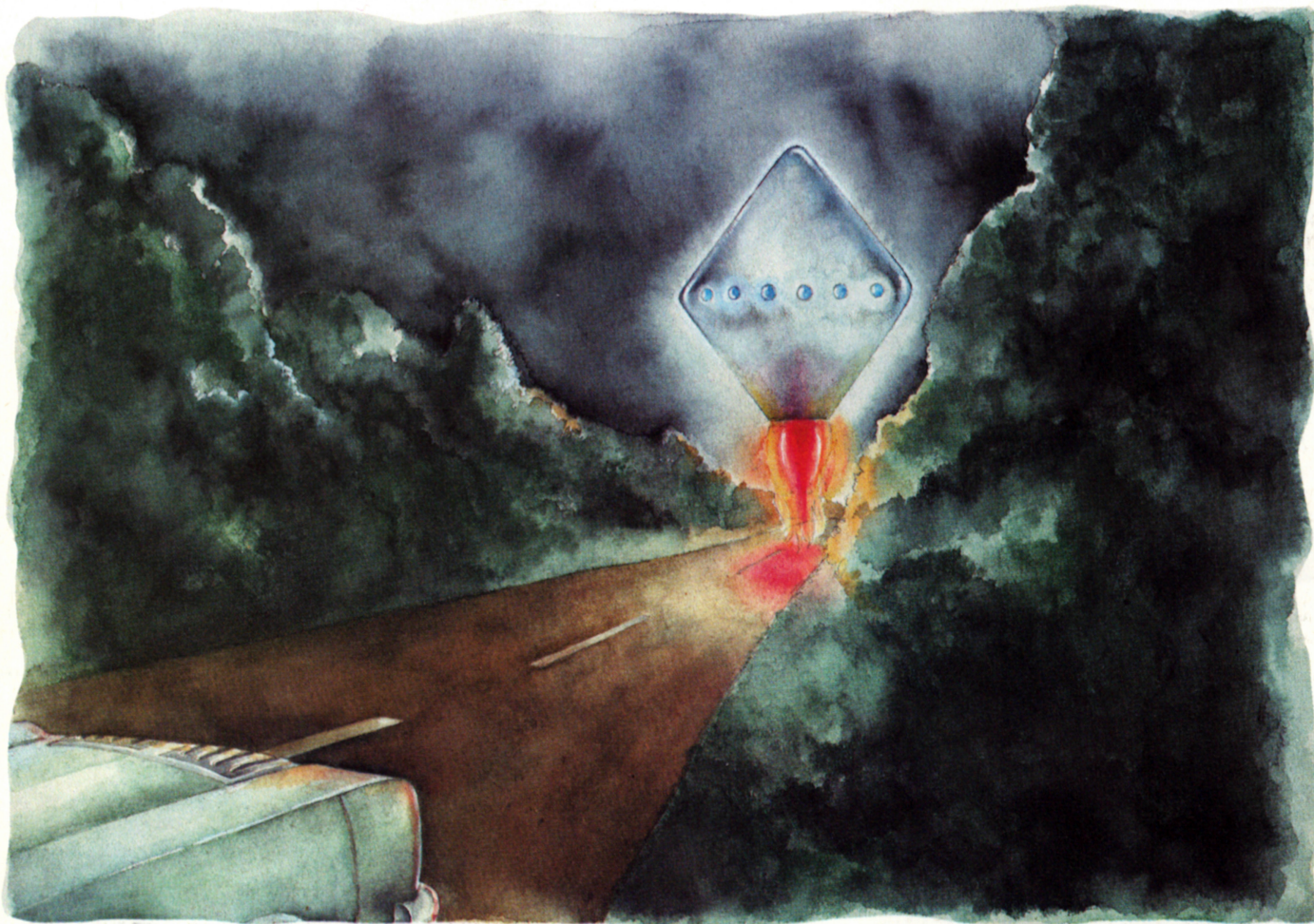
For the three spectators it was like being caught in the middle of some strange battle for the skies.

Earlier that evening, Betty Cash, Vickie Landrum and Colby Landrum had visited several small towns in the Piney Woods area of east Texas in search of a bingo game; but to their disappointment they had discovered that all bingo games had been cancelled while the clubs prepared for the New Year's Eve celebration. Instead the three of them had settled for an evening meal at a roadside restaurant in New Caney. It was soon after this that the terrifying events of the evening began.

Betty Cash, who was driving her new Oldsmobile Cutlass when the trio encountered the UFO, was then a 51-year-old business woman who ran a restaurant and a grocery store. She was planning to open a new restaurant the very next week. A year or so earlier she had undergone a heart bypass operation, and had made a complete recovery. Within the next hour she was to sustain physical injuries more debilitating than any caused by the cardiac surgery.

Vickie Landrum, then 57, is a pleasant,

Blind terror in Texas





hard-working woman who worked for Betty in the restaurant and also occasionally as a school meals assistant. She is a committed Christian, and does not believe in UFOs or extra-terrestrial life. When the bright object appeared in the sky, she thought it was the coming of the end of the world. Because she expected to see her Saviour come out of the bright cloud, she gazed intently at the UFO. Her reward was not to meet her Saviour, but to sustain severe eye damage.

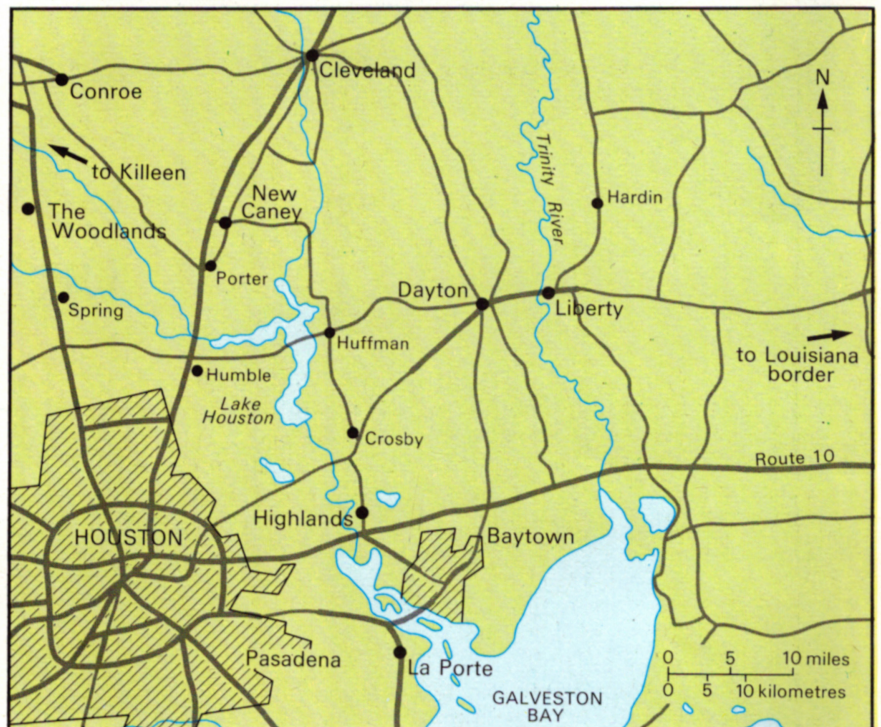
Colby Landrum, Vickie's grandson, was being brought up by her. He was a healthy and active lad, and at seven years old he had already earned several trophies for baseball, bowling and other sports. The encounter left him with severe physical and emotional scars. It is difficult to tell whether he was more frightened by the UFO or by the overpowering noise of the helicopters thundering overhead.

The day of 29 December 1980 had been cold, damp and overcast in Texas. In the Huffman area there had been periods of light rain during the day, but by night-time the rain had stopped and the sky had partially cleared. Light from the third-quarter Moon, supplemented by an airglow from lights in the surrounding area, made the sky bright and the visibility good. Because the temperature was only 40°F (4.5°C) the victims were wearing coats and the car's heater was keeping the winter chill at bay.

After leaving the restaurant some time between 8.20 and 8.30 p.m., the three drove along Highway FM1485, a road normally used only by people who live in the area because it is so isolated. Although only about 30 miles (50 kilometres) from the metropolis of Houston, the area is sparsely populated and is covered by oak and pine trees, and dotted with swamps and lakes.

Above: the lonely tree-lined road where Betty Cash and Vickie and Colby Landrum saw the UFO

Below: a map of the region north-east of Houston showing the Huffman area where the incident occurred. The three victims had dined in New Caney about half an hour earlier and were driving home to Dayton when the UFO appeared on the road ahead



It was about 30 minutes later when the three noticed the bright UFO above the treetops some distance away. Colby, an alert youngster, was the first to see it. He pointed it out excitedly to Betty and Vickie as it glowed brightly above the trees about 3 miles (5 kilometres) ahead. As they approached, it appeared to get larger and larger, rather than diminishing as an aeroplane would appear to do as it flew further away. As they realised the object was approaching the road only a short distance ahead their apprehension increased. Nevertheless they hoped to get by in time and leave it behind. But before they could do so, the object had straddled the road, blocking their way.

Vickie screamed, 'Stop the car or we shall be burned alive.' Her warning was probably correct. The object, many times larger than their car, remained hovering at treetop level and sending down an occasional large cone of fire like a rocket blast. In between these blasts it would settle downwards some 25 feet (7.5 metres) or so, only to rise again on the next cone of fire like some huge science-fiction spaceship in trouble. Vickie's vivid description of it was that it was 'like a diamond of fire'.

When Betty eventually brought the car to a standstill the object was less than 65 yards (60 metres) away. It looked as if it were made of dull aluminium, and it glowed so brightly that it lit up the surrounding forest like daylight. The four points of the diamond were blunted rather than sharp, and blue spots or lights ringed its centreline. Had the UFO not come to rest over the road, the cone of fire that periodically emanated from its lowest point would have set the forest on fire. In addition to the blast of the fire, the UFO emitted an intermittent beeping sound.

It is not clear whether Betty turned the car engine off, or whether it just died. Whichever it was, the three of them got out of the car to take a closer look at the thing that was blocking their way. Vickie stood by the open door on the right-hand side of the car, with her left hand resting on the car roof. She stared intently at the UFO.

Colby plucked at his grandmother's clothing and begged her to get back inside the car and hold him. Two or three minutes later, in response to his pleading, she did so; but she told him not to be afraid, for 'when that big man comes out of the burning cloud, it will be Jesus' and Jesus would not harm them.

As Vickie held Colby to comfort him she screamed to Betty to get back into the car with them. But Betty was so fascinated by the UFO that she walked round to the front of the car and stood there gazing intently at the bright object. She seemed to be mesmerised by it. Bathed in the bright light, she remained standing there even though the heat was burning her skin. Even the skin on the finger beneath her ring was burned. Eventually, as the object began to move up and away, she responded to Vickie's calls and walked back to the door. When she touched the door it was so painfully hot that she had to use her leather jacket to protect her hand while she got in the car.

As the three of them watched the departing UFO, a large number of helicopters appeared overhead. As Betty said, 'They seemed to rush in from all directions . . . it seemed like they were trying to encircle the thing.' Within a few seconds the UFO had disappeared behind the trees lining the highway. It was then that the victims became aware of how hot the interior of the car had



A number of small, single rotor helicopters of the Bell Huey variety, similar to the one shown above on a military exercise, were seen with the Huffman UFO

surrounding area and illuminating the helicopters.

By this time the helicopters were spread out over a 5-mile (8-kilometre) area. One main group was still near to the UFO, but moving in an erratic flight path. The others were clearly visible in a steady trail formation. At one point one of the large 'choppers' flew directly over the car engulfing it in the roar of its engine and flap of its rotor



become. Instead of the heater, they now switched on the air conditioner to make the environment more comfortable.

When the effects of the bright light had worn off, Betty started the engine and they sped off down the darkened highway. After a mile or so of twisting road they joined a larger highway and were able to turn in the direction of the departing UFO. This was about 5 miles (8 kilometres) and five minutes later. The object was clearly visible some distance ahead, and looked like a bright oblong cylinder of light. It was still lighting up the

Heavy, double rotor helicopters like the CH-47 shown above were identified by several witnesses as being present in large numbers at Huffman

blades. As they watched from this new vantage point the victims counted 23 helicopters. Many of the helicopters were the large double rotor type, with four wheels, and a large housing to the rear (these were later identified as CH-47 Chinooks, manufactured by the Vertol division of the Boeing company). Others were smaller, very fast, single rotor helicopters. These were never clearly identified, but they appeared to be of the Bell Huey variety. There was also a suggestion that there may have been a single even larger helicopter in the middle of the

Cash-Landrum case

group. Whatever the exact number of helicopters, a lot of aircrew members must have seen the UFO that night.

As soon as the UFO and the helicopters were a safe distance ahead, Betty drove on cautiously. When she reached an intersection, she turned away from the flight path of the UFO and drove towards Dayton, where the three of them lived. By this time they had been involved with the UFO and the helicopters for at least 20 minutes, perhaps longer.

Betty dropped Vickie and Colby at their home at 9.50 p.m. and went home herself. A friend and her children were waiting there for Betty to return, but by then Betty was feeling too ill to tell them about the incident. Over the next few hours Betty's skin turned red as if it were badly sunburned. Her neck swelled, and blisters erupted and broke on her face, scalp and eyelids. She started to vomit and continued to do so periodically throughout the night. By morning she was almost in a coma.

Some time between midnight and 2 a.m. Vickie and Colby began to experience similar symptoms, although less severe. At first they suffered the sunburn-like condition, then diarrhoea and vomiting. It was a miserable night for all three victims.

Colby tells all

The following morning Betty was moved to Vickie's home, and all three were cared for there. Betty's condition continued to deteriorate, and three days later she was taken to a hospital casualty department. The casualty staff assumed that Betty was a classic burn victim, and treated her accordingly. They were not told about the UFO until several days later when Colby blurted out to a doctor that he knew what had burned them.

The burns and swelling altered Betty's appearance so radically that friends and relatives who came to visit her in hospital did not recognise her. Her hair started to fall out and she was eventually to lose more than half the hair on her head. When her appearance was compared with the photograph of her taken just before Christmas, it was impossible to believe that it was the same woman. Treatment was further complicated by the fact that Betty and the others had intense headaches and painfully swollen eyes; in fact Betty's eyes were so swollen that she was unable to see for nearly a week.

The appearance of helicopters at UFO sightings is becoming a common event, as it is also at the scene of animal mutilations (see page 1119). The large number of helicopters at the Huffman incident is just another link in the chain. One thing is certain – it is virtually impossible to be mistaken about the presence of CH-47 helicopters when you are directly beneath these large noisy craft.

The evidence of all the witnesses to the Huffman event was consistent. All were interrogated separately, not only about the UFO but also about the helicopters. They



Months after seeing the UFO the victims were still suffering the results of their encounter. Above: the burn on the back of Vickie's hand. Right: a year and a half after the event, Vickie's face showed lasting damage, particularly around the eyes



provided consistent descriptions and sketches that indicated they had seen a large number of CH-47s, plus several other helicopters of a common type. They were also given silhouette charts and asked to identify any helicopters that appeared to be the same as the ones they had seen. Again, all the witnesses agreed in their identification of CH-47s.

Locating the source of the helicopters proved to be a much more difficult task. According to an official of the Houston Intercontinental Airport Federation Aviation Administration, about 350 to 400 helicopters operate commercially in the Houston area. All of these are single rotor type units; there are no CH-47s. The official also said that because helicopters fly on Visual Flight Rules (VFR), they do not need to contact the airport control tower. Other information provided by Houston was that outside a 15-mile (24-kilometre) radius from the airport, helicopters must stay below an altitude of

1800 feet (550 metres), and that due to technical limitations the Houston control radar is restricted to a minimum altitude of 2000 feet (600 metres) around Lake Houston (the Huffman area).

At the US Army's Fort Hood near Killeen, Texas, press officer Major Tony Geishauser told the *Corpus Christi Caller* that no Fort Hood aircraft were in the Houston area on 29 December 1980. 'I don't know any other place around here that would have that number of helicopters,' he said. 'I don't know what it could be . . . unless there's a super-secret thing going on and I wouldn't necessarily know about it.'

At the Robert Gray Field near Fort Hood a spokesman said they might have 100 helicopters from the field home in at one time 'for effect', but he claimed they avoided the Houston area. And all other bases in Texas and Louisiana denied they were responsible



being observed. Dozens of residents of Ohio county, Kentucky, had seen strange moving lights. But when a helicopter arrived in the area, the UFOs left. Again, all military installations denied having any helicopters airborne that night.

Betty, Vickie and Colby were not the only witnesses to the strange happenings at Huffman. An off-duty Dayton policeman and his wife were driving home from Cleveland through the Huffman area the same night and also observed a large number of CH-47 helicopters. A man living in Crosby, directly under the flight path, also reported seeing a number of heavy helicopters flying overhead.

Oilfield labourer Jerry McDonald was in his back garden in Dayton when he saw a huge UFO flying directly overhead. At first he thought it was the Goodyear airship, but he quickly realised it was some unidentified object. 'It was kind of diamond-shaped and had two twin torches that were shooting brilliant blue flames out the back,' he said. As it passed about 150 feet (45 metres) above him, he saw that it had two bright lights on it and a red light in the centre.

The same evening bakery clerk Belle Magee was in her home in Eastgate, about 8 miles (13 kilometres) west of Dayton, when she saw a bright light in the sky heading in the direction of New Caney.

Certainly Dr J. Allen Hynek, founder of the Center for UFO Studies in Evanston, Illinois, was convinced the witnesses were not mistaken. 'We are dealing with a real event,' he said, 'but we're not sure if it's a government exercise or a UFO sighting. There is a lot of top secret stuff going on that most people don't know about.' He added, 'Something sure as hell happened. Those women didn't pull out their hair and blind themselves. The connection with the event is clear-cut.'

On page 2146: the doctors are baffled by the nature of the victims' injuries

for the helicopters seen at the Huffman UFO incident.

Is it possible that the witnesses were all mistaken about seeing and hearing the helicopters? The descriptions and sketches provided by Betty, Vickie and Colby indicate that they all clearly saw helicopters of a particular configuration, which is common only to CH-47s. As far as the noise is concerned, witnesses had been accused of wrongly identifying helicopters at an earlier UFO incident on 22 March 1978, which was reported in the St Paul, Minnesota, *Dispatch*. That newspaper quoted Dan Meyers, supervisor of the Army Reserve Aviation Support Facility at Holman Field, as saying 'Just one of those helicopters at 1500 feet [450 metres] would sound like a humming chain-saw from the ground. With five helicopters up there, you would have tremendous amplification.'

In another (possibly related) incident the day before the Huffman event, helicopter activity had also been noted when UFOs were

Eighteen months after the Huffman sighting Betty Cash (top) and Colby Landrum (above) were still suffering from facial burns and other injuries

Mad, bad and dangerous to know

When Aleister Crowley – ‘the Beast’ – died in 1947, it seemed that, for all their notoriety, his life and his ‘magick’ would soon be forgotten. But, as FRANCIS KING explains, the years since his death have seen an explosion of interest in ‘Crowleyanity’

Below: Crowley in old age. He ended his days in 1947 at a boarding house in Hastings, Sussex, heavily dependent on heroin and alcohol. His landlady, who knew little of his past life, felt he exuded an aura of evil

Below right: the original design for a ceremonial sword for Crowley, by one of his few real friends, General J. F. C. Fuller

ALEISTER CROWLEY died in 1947 in comparative obscurity. There was, it is true, a slight fuss over his memorial service, which took place in the chapel of the crematorium at Brighton, Sussex, and was denounced by some pompous local councillors as a ‘black mass’. In reality the ceremony was totally innocent – consisting of no more than the writer Louis Wilkinson reading aloud some of Crowley’s poetry and prose. The matter was soon forgotten.

It seemed likely that, after a few years, only a tiny band of dedicated occultists would remember Crowley, his ‘magick’ and *The book of the law*, which, Crowley insisted – and seems genuinely to have believed – had been dictated to him by a superhuman being and was destined to be the gospel of the new age.



Ten years after his death, however, there were signs of a revival of interest in Crowley's life and opinions. John Symonds's study of Crowley's occult practices, *The magic of Aleister Crowley*, drew some attention. Second-hand copies of Crowley's books, once almost unsaleable, began to command high prices. Perhaps most significant of all, some of the 'beat poets' of California discovered the similarities between some of Crowley's teachings and the sexual mysticism with which they had become acquainted through translations of obscure Buddhist and Hindu treatises.

Crowley crazy

By the end of the 1960s a 'Crowley revival' was apparent. The Beatles included his photograph as 'one of the people we like' on the sleeve of their *Sergeant Pepper* album; an 'Abbey of Thelema' – better organised than its Sicilian predecessor, which Crowley had run in the 1920s – flourished in rural Switzerland; and most of Crowley's occult writings (although not his poetry) had been reprinted and was selling in substantial numbers.

In the 1980s this revival was showing no sign of abating. In California an occult brotherhood once led by Crowley flourished under the leadership of Grady McMurtry, many fortune tellers employ the 'Thoth Tarot cards', designed by Crowley and Lady Frieda Harris, and all over the world little groups of occultists study Crowley's writings and practise the magical techniques taught by him.

Clearly enough, there is something in 'magick' that is in tune with the times we live in. The system that Crowley constructed from elements derived from Western occultism, from tantrism (sexual yoga), and from



the demonic prose of *The book of the law* may be complete rubbish, may be of great importance, may combine some worthless features with others of great value – but clearly makes a genuine appeal to some people inclined to mystical and magical studies.

The Western occultism that Crowley incorporated into 'magick' was the 'Western Esoteric Tradition', itself a synthetic system, built up from disparate elements and combined into one harmonious, although artificial, whole.

The Western Esoteric Tradition was created in the last decade of the 19th century by S.L. MacGregor Mathers, head of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, the magical brotherhood into which Crowley had been initiated in 1898.

Mathers had taken such occult arts as



Top: Raoul Loveday, whom Crowley designated 'to be my Magickal heir', and whose death in mysterious circumstances at the Abbey of Thelema, Sicily (above), in 1918 eventually led to its closure. Loveday's wife Betty began a campaign of vilification against Crowley, which was taken up eagerly by the British press. It seems that Loveday had died from enteritis brought on by drinking contaminated water – not, as some implied, by Crowley's 'magick'

Left: the controversial filmmaker Kenneth Anger in 1955, with one of the Abbey's original doors inscribed with Crowley's creed 'Do what thou wilt'

astrology, cartomancy (fortune telling by cards), alchemy, ritual magic, the strange Enochian occult system derived from Dr Dee (see page 1970), and 'astral projection', and blended them with one another.

The Mathers system, described at length in the many books of Dr Israel Regardie, has been, and is, found by many to be a satisfactory guide to occult theory and practice. Those who have practised the whole system claim that it *works*, that it induces profound and valuable psychological and spiritual changes in its devotees.

Nevertheless, it must be admitted that Mathers's system, later incorporated almost in its entirety into Crowley's 'magick', shows signs of straining after an artificial unity. Thus, to give one example, the system attributes the 78 cards of the Tarot pack to various degrees of the zodiac used by astrologers, to various segments of the Hebrew mystical diagram known as the 'tree of life', and even to various 'Enochian letters' copied down by Dr Dee at the dictation of the 'angels' with whom he and his medium,

Aleister Crowley

Edward Kelley, believed themselves to be in communication.

Mathers made these attributions because, following the French occult writer Eliphas Levi, he believed that the Tarot cards were of ancient origin, mystical instructions in pictorial form designed by the Egyptian priests who served Thoth, god of wisdom. Crowley, following Mathers, also accepted this, going as far as to call his treatise on the Tarot *The book of Thoth*. In fact there is no evidence at all that the Tarot cards originated before the later Middle Ages, at which time, and for centuries afterwards, they were used only for playing games. It is interesting to note that occultists were not concerned with the Tarot cards before about 1780 and that, surprisingly enough, there is no evidence of them having been used for fortune telling purposes before that date.

Attractive and effective

In spite of the artificiality of the Mathers system it is internally coherent, intellectually attractive enough in its own way and, more importantly, those who have used it have found it effective. In spite of its almost glib eclecticism it is perhaps the strongest of the three strands that Crowley plaited into the rope of his 'magick'.

However, Crowley himself would not have believed this. As far as he was concerned *The book of the law* with its doctrine of the coming age of 'force and fire', of which he himself was to be the new messiah, was central to his teachings. Although he was never confident that he had fully mastered the book's meaning, it is certain that the book's meaning mastered *him*. He devoted his life to the propagation of its gospel, he studied every word of its text with the same fanatical devotion that his Christian parents

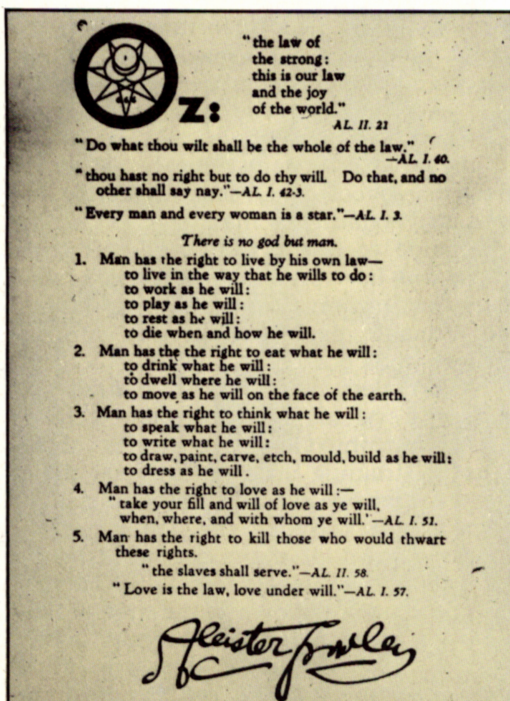
A magickal experience



When 'Prince and Princess Chioa Khan' – more properly known as Aleister Crowley (left, in 'magickal' robes) and his wife Rose – moved into apartments in Cairo in March 1904, the first thing they did was to convert one of the rooms into an occult temple.

Crowley, an ex-member of the Order of the Golden Dawn, sought to make contact with the gods – and consequently invoked them in their ancient Egyptian forms: Thoth, Isis, Apophis and Osiris. Almost immediately Rose, who, it is said, had little knowledge of occult mysteries, entered into a trance and led Crowley to the (now defunct) Boulak Museum and pointed to a certain exhibit. She had been muttering 'They are waiting for you' and 'He who was waiting was Horus.' Crowley looked closely at the exhibit: it was a statuette of Horus. But more important to him was the exhibit's number – 666. It was the number of the Beast.

For nearly a month Crowley and Rose (now called Ouarda the Seeress) invoked the gods; and the gods, they believed, spoke through them. Crowley's 'Holy Guardian Angel' Aiwass dictated what was to become his Bible, the collection of exclamatory lines known as *The book of the law*. It was to be the holy scripture of the new era of which Crowley was Messiah. But Crowley was in no doubt as to its true nature. Its originator, Aiwass, he referred to as 'our Lord God the Devil'.



Left: a postcard version of Crowley's 'magickal' opus, *The book of the law*. 'There is no god but man' seemed, to respectable churchgoers, a statement of rather shallow atheism. In fact, Crowley was ahead of his time, believing that Man's subconscious mind is responsible for many, if not all, paranormal events or 'miracles'

Right: a scene from Snoo Wilson's play *The number of the Beast*, in its London 1982 production, with John Stride as Crowley and Marty Cruickshank as a 'Scarlet Woman'

had devoted to the Bible, and – whenever he was perplexed and in need of guidance – he would open it at random and take the sentence his finger alighted upon as a direct message from the gods.

His attitude towards *The book of the law* was totally uncritical. As far as he was concerned it was beyond criticism. Thus he was in the habit of opening his conversations with everyone with a direct quotation from it: 'Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the law.' On one occasion he said this to the painter Augustus John, who testily replied: 'To hell with all laws.' Crowley felt – perhaps for the only time in his life – shocked.

Today Crowley's disciples study *The book of the law* with the same obsessive concern as their master. All religious texts are liable to conflicting interpretation and *The book of the law* is no exception; one contemporary group, for example, is the custodian of a special revelation concerning the relationship between the book and a tenth planet of the solar system, supposedly in an orbit beyond that of Pluto, called Isis.

On the whole, it seems likely that *The book of the law* is, as far as 'magick' is concerned, a source of weakness rather than strength. For its phraseology is so vague that conflicting readings of its text tend to lead to internal disagreements and schisms in the occult groups that accept its 'divine' inspiration.

Sex as a sacrament

The third element in 'magick', and perhaps the one that has received most public attention, is its tantrism – sexual mysticism and magic. Tantrism is a powerful element in both the Hinduism of Bengal and Tibetan Buddhism. It is concerned with the use of sexuality – expressed sometimes physically, sometimes only symbolically – as a sacrament leading its devotees towards mystical union with the gods.

Crowley may have come into contact with it in the course of his oriental travels, but the main source of the sexual-magic techniques that he taught, practised and incorporated into 'magick' was a German occult society called the Ordo Templi Orientis, or the Order of Templars of the Orient (OTO).

Crowley met and became friendly with the chief of this fraternity, a somewhat dubious individual called Theodor Reuss, who headed several pseudo-masonic lodges, in 1911. In the following year Crowley was appointed head of its British section, taking the imposing but perhaps ludicrous title of 'Baphomet, Supreme and Holy King of Ireland, Iona, and all the Britains within the Sanctuary of the Gnosis'.

The sex-magic of the OTO would seem, certainly to the outside observer, to be on a somewhat lower plane than that of authentic tantrism. Crowley's own diaries – his 'Magickal Record' – make it apparent that he used it more in order to obtain his material desires,



Above: a portrait of Crowley by a modern disciple. In his poem *Hymn to Pan*, Crowley had written: 'Goat of thy flock . . . I am god/And I rave and I rip and I rend/Everlasting, world without end . . .'

money and power over others, than to attain the enlightenment that is alike the goal of the Hindu and Buddhist tantrism.

Crowley wrote several instructional manuscripts, most of them now published, in which he codified Reuss's sexual teachings. They are largely concerned with complex visualisation exercises designed to be used in conjunction with sexual activity.

These, then, are the three strands that make up Crowley's 'magick'; only time will show whether all, or any of them, contain something of permanent value to students of the occult.

But one thing seems certain. Crowley was not, in the ordinary sense of the word, a charlatan. There were elements of the showman, the charlatan, and the confidence trickster in his personality. But he believed in his self-formulated system. He worked for it, suffered for it and devoted his life to it. But, sadly, it may all have been a delusion. It is said that his last words, uttered in a seedy boarding house in Hastings, Sussex, were 'I am perplexed. . . .'

Further reading

Francis King (ed.), *Crowley on Christ*, C. W. Daniel 1974
John Symonds, *The great Beast*, Mayflower 1973
John Symonds and Kenneth Grant (eds), *The confessions of Aleister Crowley*, Bantam Books (New York) 1971

The riddle of Robin Hood

The legend of Robin Hood and his merry men, living a carefree life in the greenwood, robbing the rich to give to the poor, is familiar to us all. BRIAN INNES sets the story against its early medieval background – and traces its powerful influence

LEGEND PLAYS A PECULIAR ROLE in the history of mankind. On first acquaintance a legend may seem to be pure fantasy – a story made up to represent common human problems in terms of heroes and villains, rewards and punishments. But such tales can play a subtly decisive role in determining the fate of a group of people or even a nation; what philosopher Ernst Cassirer has said of myth applies equally to this kind of legend:

In the relation between myth and history myth proves to be the primary, history the second and derived, factor. It is not by its history that the mythology of a nation is determined but, conversely, its history is determined by its mythology – or rather, the mythology of a people does not *determine* but *is* its fate.

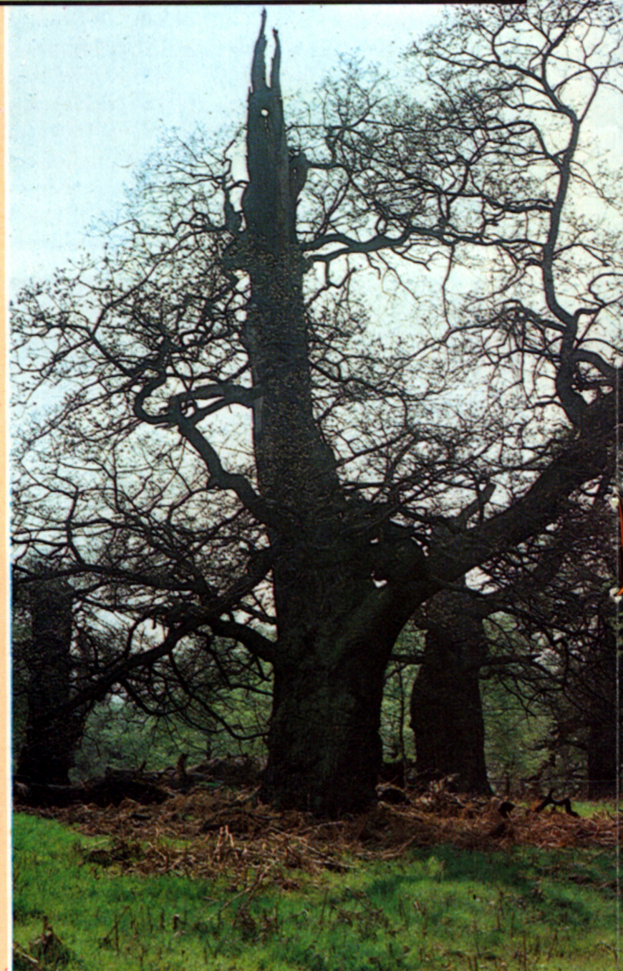
The legend of Robin Hood plays an important part in the development of the English nation after the Norman invasion of 1066. The first century of Norman occupation was marked by considerable oppression of the native English population. It has been said that in 12 months Duke William destroyed a delicately balanced feudal system within which a considerable degree of democracy was practised – a system that had taken 400 years to develop.

Englishmen of every station were jealous of their independence: they owed allegiance to their lords, but were not completely dependent on them; many of them even owned the lands on which they farmed. But with the coming of the Normans, the English nobles were killed or thrown into prison, and deprived of their lands and titles. The old lords were replaced by new ones who spoke a foreign tongue – French – and administered unfamiliar laws; the English abbots and archbishops were displaced, and the monasteries and churches had new, and often demanding, superiors. Many freemen were deprived of their land, and reduced to the position of wretched villains. When Domesday Book was completed, 20 years after the Norman conquest, a line of villages ruined during the invasion and still not rebuilt marked the line of William's advance on London; and in other parts of the country, too, villages stood deserted.

Of all the new laws introduced by the



Above: the frontispiece to the first printed version of the Robin Hood story, *A Lytell Geste of Robyn Hode*, published at some time between 1492 and 1534. The story had for some time been well-known as a ballad, and is preserved in a number of early manuscripts testifying to its popularity among both peasants and educated people



Right: William the Conqueror invests a supporter with land confiscated from the English Earl Edwin, in this 15th-century illustration. After the Norman invasion, the native English had to adjust to life under new and foreign overlords. The Robin Hood legend, popular among both the aristocracy and the peasantry, played an important part in uniting the nation

Bottom: King John (1167–1216) hunts in the royal forest. After the Norman invasion, large tracts of the English countryside were set aside for the king's hunting. They were outside the jurisdiction of ordinary law; instead, forest law obtained. And in one of them, Sherwood Forest (below), so the legend goes, lived Robin Hood and his band of outlaws



conquerors, one of the strongest in its impact on the lives of ordinary people was the forest law. William was a dedicated hunter, and the object of the new law was to preserve game for William and his court to hunt. Forest law had existed before the Norman invasion; it is known, for instance, that King Cnut – or Canute – (who died in 1035) set apart certain areas within which only he might hunt. Norman forest law, however, was much more extensive in its jurisdiction: it applied

all over the land that the king was pleased to call his forest; and at its peak, this may have covered as much as a third of the country.

Forest law protected both the beasts and their cover. This meant that often cultivated land fell within the area of the forest; the king's forest of the Hay of Hereford, for instance, included a part of the town of Hereford itself. Any peasant who took measures against animals eating his crops, or who cleared bushes on a patch of waste ground, was breaking the law. As for killing and eating the king's deer, that was tantamount to treason; a serf 'that doth hunt a wild beast and doth make him paunt [pant]' was liable to be flayed alive.

The vast and complex body of forest law served to set apart the forest from any other land in the country. And because of its relative sparseness of population, it afforded sanctuary for outlaws. 'Outlaw' meant exactly that – he was denied the protection of the law, and became an outcast from society, with no more rights than a hunted beast. Robin Hood and his followers were outlaws, and lived in the forest.

Lust, treachery and violence

Isolated from the centres of civilisation, they lived, according to the legend, an anarchic kind of life very different from that made popular by the courtly ballads recited in aristocratic circles throughout the medieval period. Unlike the chivalric heroes of these verses, they were lusty, treacherous and, above all, violent. When Little John and Much the Miller's Son waylaid a solitary monk and his young page in the forest,

John smote of the munkis head
No longer wolde he dwell:
So did Moch the litull page
For fere lest he wolde tell.

And Robin himself had no hesitation in hitting a man when he was down:

He hit so the proud Sheriff
On the ground he lay full still.
And or he might up arise
On his feet to stand
He smote off the Sheriff's head
With his bright brand.

The legend says that Robin Hood and his merry men lived in the greenwood. To understand the significance of this, it is important to realise what the landscape of early medieval England looked like. As W.G. Hoskins remarks in his *The making of the English landscape*,

From rising ground England must have seemed one great forest before the fifteenth century, an almost unbroken sea of treetops with a thin blue spiral of smoke rising here and there at long intervals. Even after twenty generations of hacking at the waste, the frontiers of cultivation were rarely far away from the homesteads.

And beyond these frontiers was what was known as the greenwood – an unnerving,





Left: Robin Hood encounters the Bishop of Hereford, in this typical illustration from an Edwardian children's book. The legend of Robin Hood as enemy of the rich, friend of the poor is familiar – but in their original form the stories were much more than mere moralising tales

unsettling place, full of real dangers such as wild boars, wolves and bears as well as others that, to the medieval mind, were equally real: supernatural creatures, elves and fairies.

Robin Hood and his merry men, then, lived in the greenwood – a magical, enchanted world where anything might happen. Their identification with the magical world is made stronger by the fact that they dressed in Lincoln green – and green was the colour traditionally worn by fairies. On another level, Robin and the outlaws were a band of men living beyond the law in an area reserved for the pleasure of the Norman overlords – and, it must be remembered, speaking a language largely incomprehensible to those overlords.

What do we know about the legend itself? The first reference to the existence of a ballad about Robin Hood is in William Langland's poem *Piers Plowman*, written around 1380:

Should I die for it today, I dread me
sore

I could not perfectly my Paternoster
say as the Priest it singeth

But I know rhymes of Robin Hood and
Randolph Earl of Chester.

By the middle of the 15th century, two or three generations later, the 'rhymes of Robin Hood' were sufficiently widely known to be preserved in manuscript:

Hit befel on Whitsontide
Erly in a May mornynge
The son up feyre can shyne
And the briddis mery can syng

'This is a mery mornynge' sed Littull
John

'Be hym that dyed on tre
'A more mery man than I am one
'Lyves not in Cristiante.

'Pluk up thi hert, my dere mayster'
Litull John can sey
'And thynk hit is a full fayre tyme
'In a mornynge of May.'

'Ye, on thyng greves me' said Robyn
'And does my hert mych woo
'That I may not no solem day
'To mas nor matyns goo.'

Within another half century, the first books were being printed in England, and it was not long before Wynkyn de Worde, one of the earliest printers, had brought out *A Lytell Geste of Robyn Hode* . . . a mery geste of Robyn Hode and his meyne, and of the proude sheryfe of Notyngham . . . explycit. Kynge Edwarde

Right: Robin Hood and the tanner Arthur a Bland fight with quarter-staffs, in a scene from *Robin Hood and the potter*. In this ballad, which survives in its earliest version from the 18th century, Robin is debased into a figure who can be insulted: 'I care not a fig for you looking so big,' says Arthur a Bland, 'Mend yourself where you can'



The Knight's tale

The story of Robin Hood and the poor knight (right, in an illustration from Howard Pyle's *Merry adventures of Robin Hood*) appears in the first fytte – or canto – of Wynkyn de Worde's *A Lytell Geste of Robyn Hode*. It is dinnertime in the outlaws' camp, but Robin will not eat until he has welcomed an unexpected guest to his table. Three of the outlaws set out to find a guest, and encounter a knight who gratefully accepts their invitation. At the end of the meal, however, Robin suggests that the knight should pay. He explains he cannot:

'I have nothing in my coffers,' said the knight,
Which I may offer you, for shame.'
It turns out that, in order to stand bail for

and *Robyn hode & Lytell Johan*.

The title of this first printed reference to Robin Hood has given rise to all sorts of misconceptions. We know all about Robin Hood and his Merry Men, and the Sheriff of Nottingham, and Little John – or do we? First of all, there are no merry men. The title promises us a *mery geste*: a *geste*, however, is a tale of deeds, not a joke or a pleasantry, and the fact that it is ‘merry’ means that it has a happy ending and is not a tragedy. *Meyne* comes from the Old French *mesnie*, and it means a household, a group of servants, as in the modern French *ménage*. The sheriff was not the medieval equivalent of the minor local police chief of the Westerns, with a tin star and an itching trigger finger, but the king’s representative, responsible for law and order over most of Nottinghamshire and southern Yorkshire as far as the sea coast. And as for John, his epithet may not, after all, refer to his size: it does begin to look as if his family name was Lytell.

Yeoman hero

To the composers of the popular ballads, it was important that Robin was a yeoman – not a noble, or even a gentleman landowner, but a small tenant farmer who held his land at fee, only one grade above the humblest toiling peasant. And, just as important, he was English. After three centuries of Norman domination, the peasantry and yeomanry preserved their Anglo-Saxon blood; but there was gradual intermarrying in the upper classes, and steadily the Norman influence was being diluted. French was spoken at court, and used for official documents; but the majority of the population spoke English – and it is obvious that even the upper classes understood it. The ballads may have been of the people, but those who preserved them in manuscript or bought the early printed books were rich, educated men.

What is certain is that by the late 15th century the story of Robin Hood was a familiar one to most Englishmen – and by



this time people of Norman stock were proud to associate themselves with the name. The ballads helped to unify the two streams – the lord of the manor and the yeoman, the oppressive newcomer and the oppressed native – into a single nation. They glorified freedom and held the dishonest and corrupt up to ridicule.

All the evidence suggests that the first ballads about Robin Hood were composed about 1330. Much later than this, and they would not have been sufficiently familiar for Langland to refer to them as he did in 1380; much earlier, and we would expect to find some earlier reference. It is true that, for the year 1283, Andrew Wyntoun wrote in his *Chronycle of Scotland*,

Lytell John and Robyne Hude

Waythemen [outlawed hunters] were
commended gude

In Yngilwode and Barnysale

Thai usyd all this tyme thare travale.

But he was writing in 1420.

Robin Hood is the last in a line of romantic English outlaws that stretches over three centuries: Hereward the Wake, Fulk Fitz-Waryn, Adam Bell, Clim of the Clough and William of Cloudeley are his literary predecessors. But while most of these five are known only to medievalists or to ballad collectors, the legend of Robin Hood is added to by each generation.

Just about every incident from every folktale ever told has been grafted onto the story of Robin Hood. But do the ballads nevertheless contain a core of truth? When we read the stories of Robin Hood, or see him portrayed on the screen, are we learning of the exploits of a real man – mythologised now, with the efforts of writers like Roger Lancelyn Green and film-makers like Walt Disney, far beyond any tenuous connection with history? Or is he a legend, a projection of people’s hopes and desires, a fiction?

On page 2166: the evidence that Robin Hood was a real historical character



his son, who has committed a murder, the knight has had to sell his possessions and mortgage his estate for £400 to the abbot of St Mary’s, York. Robin lends him the money, and the knight sets out in the company of Little John.

In York, meanwhile, the abbot and his cronies are rubbing their hands in glee at the thought of the knight’s estates, which will be forfeit to them if he cannot find the money by the appointed day. But in come the knight and Little John, bearing the £400. The abbot’s discomfiture is complete:

The abbot sat still, and ate no more,
For all his royal fare;
He leaned his head on his shoulder
And soon began to stare.

One of the best-documented cases of a medium producing ectoplasmic forms is that of Eva C, many of whose materialisations were photographed. ROY STEMMAN describes how she was subjected to stringent investigation

IN THE FIRST DECADE of this century a young French girl living in Algiers began to exhibit remarkable psychic powers. Marthe Beraud, the daughter of a French army officer, was apparently able to produce full-form materialisations of an ectoplasmic substance during seances. As her abilities as a medium became known, she came under the scrutiny of some of Europe's leading psychical researchers, many of whom were convinced that the phenomena produced by 'Eva

Eva C was born about 1890 and grew up in Algiers (below) where she became engaged to the son of General Noel – at whose house seances were held, and where her powers as a medium were discovered. Unhappily Eva's fiancé died before they could be married, but her career as a medium flourished. At seances held in Paris, like the one held on 7 June 1911 (left), Eva was able to produce ectoplasmic materialisations even though her hands and feet were held by two witnesses throughout the proceedings

C' – the pseudonym of Marthe Beraud – were genuine ectoplasmic 'teleplasms'.

But the suspicion of fraud arose very early in Eva's career. In 1904 a lawyer named Marsault attended seances held at the Villa Carmen, home of the Noel family who ran a Spiritualist circle, and claimed that the young medium confessed she faked the phenomena for fun. Yet less than a year later one of the most respected investigators of the day, Professor Charles Richet, published a favourable report of Eva's mediumship.

Richet elaborated upon his experiences with Eva in his book *Thirty years of psychical research* (1923) and said he had been able to see the first lineaments of materialisations as they were formed. A kind of liquid or pasty jelly emerges from the mouth or the breast of Marthe which organises itself by degrees, acquiring the shape of a face or a limb. . . . I have seen this paste spread on my knee, and slowly take form so as to show the rudiment of the radius, the cubitus, or metacarpal bone. . . .



Shapes from the shadows



Richet (who was professor of physiology at the Faculty of Medicine in Paris) admitted that these formations were often very imperfect. Sometimes they looked like flat images 'so that in spite of oneself one is inclined to imagine some fraud, since what appears seems to be the materialisation of a semblance, and not of a being.'

But at other times Eva did produce recognisable spirit forms. Richet witnessed one such materialisation at the Villa Carmen:

At first it was only a white, opaque spot like a handkerchief lying on the ground before the curtain, then this handkerchief quickly assumed the form of a human head level with the floor, and a few moments later it rose up in a straight line and became a small man enveloped in a kind of white burnous, who took two or three halting steps in front of the curtain and then sank to the floor and disappeared as if through a trap-door. But there was no trap-door.

A spirit who regularly appeared at Eva's seances was Bien Boa, who was said to have died 300 years earlier. One remarkable picture shows him with a thick beard, wearing a helmet, and draped with ectoplasm. Richet maintained that on five or six occasions he saw both Bien Boa and Eva at the same time. The phantom's eyes moved, and so did his lips as he tried to speak. The witnesses could also hear him breathing and the professor used a flask containing a chemical solution to test if Bien Boa's breath contained carbon dioxide. It did.

At another seance a beautiful Egyptian princess was seen. This spirit, said Richet, was well-defined and wore a gilt ribbon or



diadem in her fair hair. She was laughing, and he could see her pearly teeth. Richet was told to bring scissors the following day so that he could cut a lock of the spirit's hair. When the woman materialised again he saw that she had very abundant hair, though he had trouble distinguishing her face.

As I was about to cut a lock high up, a firm hand behind the curtain lowered mine, so that I cut only about six inches [15 centimetres] from the end. . . . I have kept this lock: it is very fine, silky and undyed. Microscopical examination shows it to be real hair . . . Marthe's hair is very dark and she wears her hair very short.

Was it possible that Eva was producing these phenomena by smuggling props into the seance room? Many other mediums have



Eva's manifestations were carefully investigated by such eminent psychical researchers as Baron von Schrenck-Nötzing and Professor Charles Richet (top) and Mme Juliette Bisson (shown above in her seance room) in whose Parisian home Eva lived for several years. Before a seance Eva was stripped, searched and clothed in a special garment

Left: at a seance held in Paris on 13 March 1911 with Schrenck-Nötzing, Richet and Mme Bisson in attendance, Eva produced ectoplasm that assumed the shape of hands

been caught doing so before and since, but Richet and other investigators went to great lengths to satisfy themselves that the medium was not using trickery.

At seances conducted by the German physician Baron von Schrenck-Nötzing over a four-year period the most stringent precautions were taken. The seance cabinet, which was usually a curtained section of the room, was searched; Eva was stripped naked in front of witnesses and then clothed in a close-fitting garment from neck to feet. Often her head was completely covered by a veil of tulle, which was then sewn to the other garment.

Despite all these measures sceptics still suggested that Eva was somehow able to secrete props on her person. The investigators carried out mouth, vaginal and anal examinations, but the medium was never found to be hiding anything. Another theory was that she was able to swallow the props and regurgitate them during the seance. She was therefore given syrup of bilberries to drink, so that it would colour anything she had swallowed. But the ectoplasm that subsequently appeared was as white as before. On one occasion Eva was even given an



emetic before a seance, to make sure she had not swallowed muslin or paper. Within 10 minutes she had vomited, and another theory was disproved. Even if she *had* managed to smuggle props into the seance room, the controls were so strict that it would seem to have been impossible for her to use them.

Throughout Schrenck-Nötzing's investigations not a single seance was held in total darkness. A red light was used: at first this was a single lamp, but later on the phenomena were witnessed beneath a six-lamp chandelier of more than 100 watts. The medium sat behind a curtain or curtains to provide her with the darkness necessary to produce ectoplasm. But she usually sat with her hands visible, drawing the curtains apart when phenomena occurred. At other times witnesses held her hands all the time.

One of the investigators who conducted the seances with Schrenck-Nötzing was Mme Juliette Bisson, in whose house Eva C lived for several years. To record their visual observations, the two researchers used a number of cameras (sometimes as many as nine), including stereoscopic equipment. These were arranged to take pictures simultaneously in order to record phenomena from a number of vantage points (including above and behind the curtain) not usually accessible to investigators. It was this arrangement that produced one of the most damaging pieces of evidence against Eva C. At a seance held in Paris on 27 November 1912, at which Schrenck-Nötzing and Mme Bisson were the only observers, photographs were taken that showed the side view of a flat, creased disc, on which the words 'Le' in small type and 'Miro' in large type were

Eva produces ectoplasm in the form of a human face at a session in Paris on 22 November 1911. Although sceptics said that Eva's materialisations were unconvincing, others such as Dr Gustave Geley were sure that they were genuine. Geley described in detail how her ectoplasms were produced. Eva was first seated in a dark cabinet, he said, and then put into a hypnotic state. When the phenomena started to appear they produced painful sensations in her; she sighed and moaned, and the moans ceased when the forms were complete

visible. Schrenck-Nötzing commented: 'That is evidently meant to be "Le Miroir"'. We can just recognise the top of an "I" following the "o", but the next "R" is covered. I cannot form any opinion on this curious result.'

Others could, however, and they were quick to suggest that the medium had used an image cut from the magazine *Le Miroir*. Yet her hands were in full view during the production of this ectoplasmic shape, according to Schrenck-Nötzing.

Schrenck-Nötzing published the *Le Miroir* picture, together with some candid criticisms, in 1914 in his book on the *Phenomena of materialisation*, in which the pseudonym 'Eva C' was used for the first time. Perhaps Schrenck-Nötzing concealed the identity of the medium because he was afraid that an earlier allegation of fraud against her (in Algiers, when she was supposed to have confessed to cheating) would discredit his work.

'Playing the ghost'

This allegation had been made by an Arab coachman who had been dismissed by General Noel (in whose home the earlier seances took place) for theft. The coachman (who was called Areski) said he had 'played ghost' at the seances; he was even put on show dressed in white by a doctor in Algiers who wanted to expose the medium. But Areski's allegation is barely credible. He claimed that he entered the seance room with everyone else, and while the other sitters were examining the furniture he would slip behind the curtain in readiness to play the part of a phantom. Richet, who attended these seances, dismissed the claim indignantly: 'Now, I declare formally and solemnly that during the seances - 20 in number - Areski was not once permitted to enter the seance room.'

Another allegation of fraud came from an observer who believed that Mme Bisson was collaborating with the medium, in order to dupe Schrenck-Nötzing. The doubting Thomas employed a Paris detective agency to keep a watch on the two women, gather information and even acquire copies of Schrenck-Nötzing's seance photographs. But in the course of an eight-month enquiry the agency failed to find any evidence of fraud, nor did it discover what material was being used to produce the materialisations.

The photographs themselves, many of which were published in Schrenck-Nötzing's book, would not convince anyone of the reality of materialisation. They appear to be crude fakes. Many show crumpled and creased two-dimensional images that seem to be attached to the medium's hair. They are a far cry from the fully formed spirits that are said to walk and talk at the materialisation seances of the most powerful mediums.

Nevertheless much of what occurred in the presence of Eva C is difficult to explain in

normal terms, considering the strict controls imposed on her. At those seances that produced results (on average half the sittings were negative) a white substance often appeared; this would change shape, move around slowly and throw out antennae-like spikes. Sometimes it would form itself into a perfect hand in which nails and bones could be detected. It would then return to a blob of white and disappear. Richet described the phenomenon as:

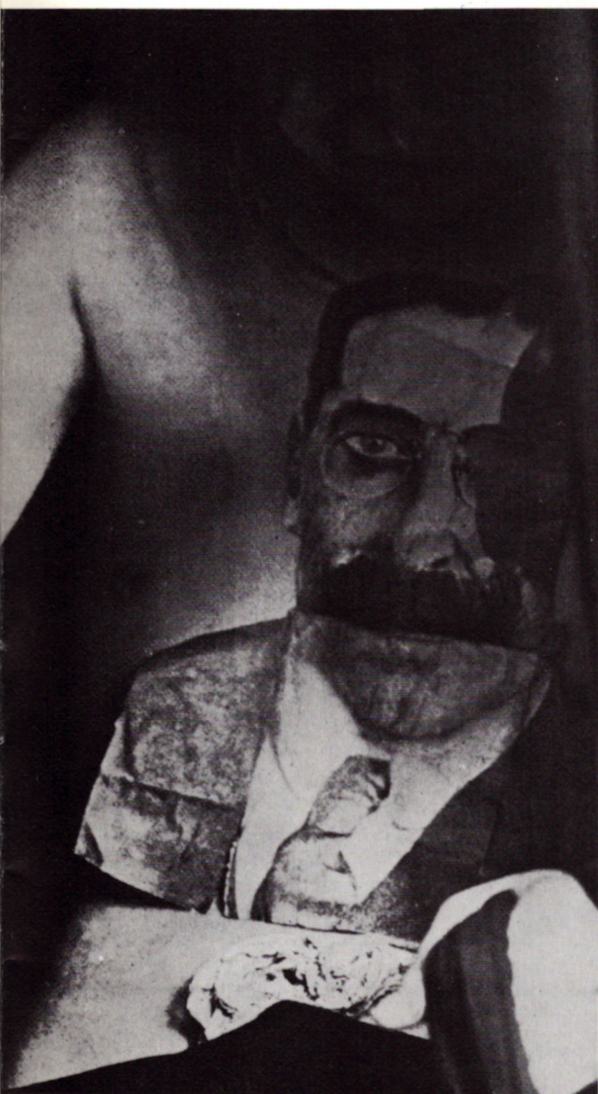
a luminous and plastic emanation proceeding usually from her mouth, sometimes from her navel (when alone with Mme Bisson she was completely nude); sometimes from her breast; sometimes from her armpits. It is a whitish substance that creeps as if alive, with damp, cold, protoplasmic extensions that are transformed . . . into a hand, fingers, a head, or even into an entire figure.

Another testimony comes from Dr Gustave Geley of France who wrote in his book *From the unconscious to the conscious* (1919):

From the mouth of Eva there descends to her knees a cord of white substance of the thickness of two fingers . . . the



Above: this photograph, taken by a camera above Eva's head on 27 November 1912, did considerable damage to her reputation. The letters 'MIRO . . .' suggested to sceptics that Eva was using an image cut from the magazine *Le Miroir*



Left: at a session on 19 January 1913, Eva was alone with Mme Bisson and was completely nude. She nevertheless managed to produce a materialisation. However, many people found the two-dimensional image unconvincing

cord . . . detaches itself from the medium and moves towards me. I then see the extremity thicken like a swelling, and this terminal swelling expands into a perfectly modelled hand. I touch it; it gives a normal sensation; I feel the bones, and the fingers with their nails. Then the hand contracts, diminishes, and disappears in the end of the cord.

Geley held experimental sessions with Eva in 1917 and 1918 at his own laboratories. Before these seances she was stripped, searched and dressed in a garment that was then sewn at the back and wrists. Her hands were also held in full sight outside the curtains throughout the seances.

Whatever others many have thought of Eva's strange mediumistic powers, Geley was in no doubt. 'I do not merely say: There was no trickery; I say there was no possibility of trickery. . . . The materialisations took place under my own eyes, and I have observed the genesis and . . . development.'

After her run of successful seances with Geley Eva's powers seem to have declined. She visited London in 1920 and held 40 seances for the Society for Psychical Research over a two-month period. But half of these were blank and the others resulted in only weak phenomena. Although no evidence of fraud was detected the SPR committee suggested that regurgitation of paper and fabric could have produced the 'materialisations' they witnessed. In 1922 Eva gave a series of 15 seances at the Sorbonne in Paris, but these were equally inconclusive. Both Eva and her materialisations faded into obscurity; she is thought to have died in 1943.

Secrets of the stone towers

The picturesque *trulli*, with their unique conical roofs and mysterious painted symbols, intrigue the traveller to Puglia in southern Italy. FREDERICK GOODMAN asks if these symbols are magical or mundane

THERE IS ONLY ONE PLACE where the curious structures known as *trulli* can be found: the region of Puglia in southern Italy. And the biggest cluster of these distinctively turreted buildings is located in Alberobello, a small town 20 miles (35 kilometres) north of Taranto in the very heel of the boot of Italy.

From a small one-room cowshed to a whole complex of dwellings, sometimes of two or three levels, the most notable element of this architecture is the conical roof, which gives the *trulli* their name. In the singular form of *trullo*, this Italian word was probably derived from the Latin *turris*, meaning 'tower'. But some scholars support the notion that the name comes from the Greek word for a measuring cup that, when inverted, is shaped like a *trullo*.

The origin of these unique *trulli* is hotly disputed. Suggestions that the roofs were derived from Mycenaean or Etruscan tomb designs have never gained much credence, but it is generally agreed that the distinctive form must have been brought by an early wave of migration from a Levantine or African country.

There is another special thing about the *trulli*, which is that the people who live in them often paint a white symbol on the conical towers. These symbols in themselves represent one of the most intriguing aspects of the folklore of Puglia, and the strange fact is that nobody has been able to offer a satisfactory explanation as to when and why

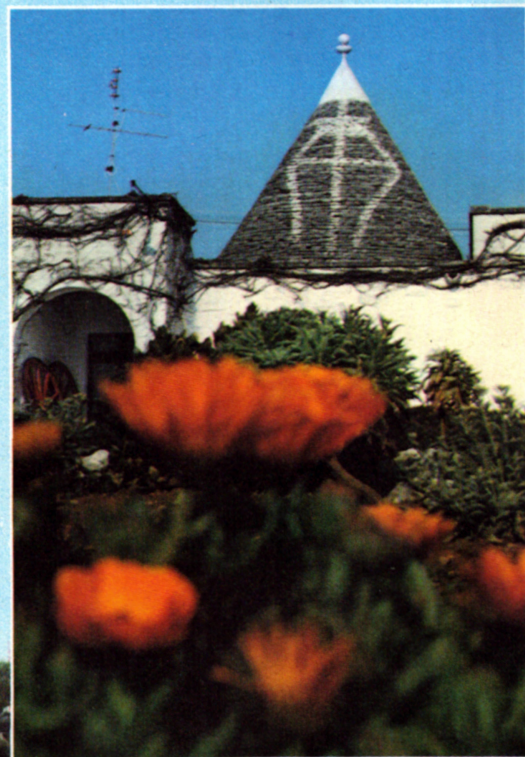
Below: the little town of Alberobello in Italy has the largest concentration of the structures known as *trulli*, whose origin is shrouded in mystery

Below right: this monogram on one of the *trulli* roofs of a large Alberobello hotel is made up of a capital A over a cross. There are two double meanings in this symbol: the cross represents the 'tree' upon which Christ died and the *albero* ('tree') in the town's name. The whole symbol then stands both for the town and for the beauty of the Christian cross

the local inhabitants began to so decorate their homes.

As we might expect from a country steeped in the traditions of the Western Church, the majority of the symbols that appear on the *trulli* are Christian. By far the most frequently used is that of the simple Latin cross, but there are many variations of cross forms.

Were the symbols merely Christian, it is unlikely that they would have attracted much attention. However, some of the symbols are distinctly un-Christian, and are derived from a wide variety of sources including astrology, the *qabalah* and alchemy. Such symbols have excited the interest of scholars, but have also given rise to some rather far-fetched theories as to the intentions of the peasant farmers





produced by Rudolf Koch in 1930, for some of the symbols appear to be taken directly from this source.

However, this group of 'forgeries' should not deflect us from the genuine trulli symbols, though information about them is hard to come by. When questioned about the signs, for example, local residents are not particularly helpful – simply because their own information is so sketchy. One or two admit readily that they merely follow the outline of the existing symbols because it has always been done that way in the family. When they do try to explain the origin of the symbols they paint on their roofs, they show little knowledge of the actual meanings of the signs. One trulli dweller said that the symbol:



is 'the cross of Christ'. This tells little of the story. For it is almost certainly a variant of

who probably originated the custom of decorating the trulli towers with symbols.

The earliest mention of the symbols seems to be in the 17th century, and records show that they were generally restricted, then as now, to the agricultural areas of Puglia. A few scholars have argued that the practice of trulli painting started only in the 20th century; but there are photographs of the 1890s in existence that show trulli painted with symbols. The age of the symbols themselves has been much debated, without conclusion. Some say they date from the beginning of the Christian era; others believe they originated in the 15th and 16th centuries, even though some borrowing from earlier periods would naturally have taken place.

The influence of the tourist industry has undoubtedly caused the proliferation of the symbols. For example, in preparation for a visit to the town of Alberobello by Mussolini in 1934, the official tourist board actively encouraged the painting of the symbols on the trulli. Photographs of the town at that time show a profusion of symbols. Not surprisingly, one of the prominent and frequent ones was the most common of the Fascist symbols:



This same section of Alberobello, seen in the late 1960s from much the same place as a photograph of the 1934 event, revealed a single forlorn painting of an ordinary cross.

It is all too apparent that this sudden flourishing of symbols in 1934 had little to do with the tradition of trulli painting. Many of the symbols were copied, often rather inexpertly, from books on astrology and alchemy. In fact, it is tempting to think that some official in the tourist board had access to the influential if unreliable book of symbols

Above: one of the simpler trulli symbols is this letter R, which is probably the initial of the family living there

Right: the most common symbol on the trulli is the Latin cross. There are also many variations of cross forms, which speak for the Christian heritage of those who paint the symbols



Below: samples of the symbols painted on the trulli roofs especially for the visit of Mussolini to Alberobello in 1934

Bottom: a random selection of some of the more unusual symbols found on the Alberobello trulli





the early Christian symbol that in turn is derived from the Greek letter phi:



The graphic form of a circle with a vertical line through it suggests the idea of a spiritual descent into the 'globe' of the world, and is therefore easily linked with the central Christian tenet of Christ's descent to Earth. But there is also a logical basis for the adoption of phi as a Christian symbol. This is because Christ was linked with the idea of light, and the Greek word for light is *phos*, which begins with the letter phi. This letter appears on early Christian tombs, in which use it implies that the soul of the departed would not find itself in the realm of darkness – the Hades of the Greeks – but would ascend into the world of light: even into the bosom of Christ, known as the 'light of the world'.

Some of the modern trulli symbols are little more than the initials of the owners' names. Slightly more esoteric is the monogram found on one of the trulli roofs of a large hotel in Alberobello, made up of the capital letter A over a cross. This cross is obviously intended to have a double meaning – it is the 'tree' upon which Christ died, and it is also the tree, *albero*, in the name Alberobello, which means 'beautiful tree'. The whole symbol on the trullo therefore has a double meaning: it refers to the town, and also to the idea of the cross being made beautiful by the redemptive act of Christ. The A also stands for the *alpha*, which is one of the standard early Greek symbols adopted by the Christians to symbolise the idea of 'beginning', a reference to the new Christian era.

A strong letter P, which may have come about by the thickening of the lines when the Greek letter rho, which resembles the Roman letter P, was painted over many times

The trulli symbols are most often painted in a chalk pigment paint, which calls for frequent renewing. This constant overpainting tends to thicken lines and has the effect of changing the forms. For example, some of the 'swallows' or birds:



have with the passage of time turned into angels:



The strong capital letter P on one trullo in Alberobello is without doubt a result of the overpainting of the Greek letter rho:



which was one of the many monograms of Christ. As such, it was a powerful protective symbol among the early Christians. The rho and its variants – especially that of the chi rho:



the first two letters of the Greek word for Christ – are still found on some of the trulli in their original form. Now, in the case of this particular P, it is clear that the original form of the rho was lost as it was overpainted, till it was transformed into a symbol that the person who repainted it could recognise and understand. Some of the inhabitants think that such a trulli P stands for the Latin word *pax*, meaning 'peace'. But one local woman gave a simpler explanation when she said that it was used because the trullo itself was in the street named Portabella.

Certainly the modern generation do not show the same pride in painting their trulli symbols as did the older generation. From photographs taken in Alberobello and its environs in the early 1970s, it is evident that fewer and fewer of the towers are being decorated. There are far more television aerials than there are mystical symbols over the roofs!

The Christian ethos still remains, of course, and so the cross and its many variants still predominate. By and large there appears to have been little change in the local view of the power of the cross since medieval times. More than likely the trulli dwellers would echo the sentiments of that infamous book used during the Inquisition, the *Malleus maleficarum* ('The witches' hammer'), which proclaimed that demonic power and the evil eye might be curtailed merely by making the sign of the cross in the air. They do just that with their trulli symbols.

Is there a dark and satanic side to the symbols on the trulli roofs? See page 2178

Post script

Your letters to
THE UNEXPLAINED

Dear Sir,

Because of a strange experience that my sister had in July 1982, I was fascinated to read the article entitled 'Karma in Kensington' in issue 96 of *The Unexplained*. Of particular interest were Garth Moore's observations on the survival of the mind after the death of the brain.

On 20 July my mother died in hospital after a painful illness. While talking to the nursing sister who told us the news, my sister and I got the distinct impression that she was rather confused. She said that my mother died at 5.45. But – strange as it may seem – we felt that she was not telling the truth.

On 26 July, the night before the funeral, my sister was awakened by the sound of mother calling persistently, and with some urgency. Although she could see no one, my sister said mother's voice was as clear and normal as if she were living. She said:

'Doreen, I want you to know it didn't happen like the sister said. I passed away at 3.45. I could feel the fluid come up in my throat and I couldn't cough it up. I don't blame the doctor: he got frightened and started to draw off the fluid. I couldn't stand it any more. I'm ever so sorry, I just gave up.'

This message explained the nursing sister's apparent confusion. At one point during mother's illness, her doctor had aspirated fluid from her body, but she was so distressed by this that he agreed he would do it again only with her consent. However, while he was on holiday another doctor decided it was necessary to draw off the fluid and proceeded to do so – against the wishes of the sister, who knew of mother's views on the matter.

I don't know why the sister lied to us about mother's death; there was no need – we both knew her illness was terminal. Medical ethics must have dictated that she stand by the doctor, even if she did not agree with him.

I should be glad to know if Chancellor Moore would consider this evidence of mind survival after brain death.

Yours faithfully,

M. Callaway (Mrs)

Uttoxeter, Staffs.

Dear Sir,

I find your articles on the mysteries of mind, space and time fascinating. Perhaps you may be interested in my experiences.

First, I am female, married, and aged 64 years. I do not think I have any extra-sensory abilities – some feminine intuition perhaps! – and I do not search the sky for UFOs.

Until October 1980 – when my husband and I retired to North Devon – we lived in Harrow Weald, Middlesex, where we had had the same house for 42 years. My bedroom at the rear of the house looked out over the back gardens of an adjacent row of houses and, slightly to the right of our house, over the playing field of a school.

On retiring to my bedroom on the night of Tuesday, 25 March 1980 at about 10.45 p.m., I went over to the window and opened it wide to take a look at the sky. My room was well lit, as I had been trying on a garment I was making. It was a dry night, and the sky was very dark. Almost immediately, there appeared

on the horizon straight in front of me a brilliant star. I became aware that it was travelling fast towards me. I reached for my spectacles, and looked again at this object.

As it approached, silently and very close, the 'star' turned a fluorescent green for a few seconds and then faded away. I wondered what had happened – and then saw, to my amazement, that the object had made a sharp right-hand turn, and against the dark sky I could just make out the outline of a large dark object something like the shape of a whale or submarine. Then, a few seconds later, it made a further right-hand turn, and started back in the south-westerly direction from which it had come. I then saw it had what appeared to be six 'portholes', each around 2 feet [60 centimetres] square, close together, all of them pulsating simultaneously with a deep orange to red fire. There was no noise. I believe that whoever was piloting this craft could see me as well as I could see the UFO, because it came so close. I have never seen anything like it before. I quite expected the local newspapers to report this incident, but there was nothing. I cannot believe I was the only person to see it, as the area is fairly heavily populated. The time was 11.13 p.m. exactly.

There was another strange incident that happened during the late 1970s. I had been doing some shopping on my way home from work one afternoon around 3.30., when I stopped in front of a church. I put down my shopping, opened my handbag and took out a bunch of keys. As I was transferring them from my left hand to the little finger of my right hand, they suddenly disappeared into thin air. I just couldn't believe it. I searched my bags, pockets, the lining of my coat; I examined the ground, and went back to the three shops I had visited. I reported the loss to the police – the keys were never found; I knew they wouldn't be. There is no rational explanation, but I feel sometimes that there are invisible beings around us, watching us – and perhaps occasionally doing things to make us aware that they are there.

Yours faithfully,

L. L. V. Simmons (Mrs)

Braunton, North Devon

Dear Sir,

I think you may be interested in something that happened to me a few years ago – an experience that convinced me that there is some evidence for survival after death.

In October 1974 I was admitted to hospital suffering from meningitis. I was in terrible pain and, frankly, didn't care whether I lived or died. Then a strange thing happened to me. The pain in my head suddenly ceased, and I felt at rest and calm. Suddenly I found myself looking down on my body as it was lying on the bed. Then I started to float up towards the window, and could see a cord joining my other self to my body. It was a most enjoyable feeling and I did not want to return to a 'normal' state. Then I became aware of my father, who had died nine years previously, sitting beside my body, looking up at me and calling my name. I felt myself re-enter my body and once again I was racked with terrible pain.

Yours faithfully,

L. Clarke

Waltham Abbey, Essex

Oddities and explanations



Some of the exciting new series starting soon in *The Unexplained*

Secrets of the zodiac

The familiar 12 signs of the zodiac have not always carried the same significance. Once, for example, Virgo was associated with the Virgin Mary and Capricorn was represented as being half a fish. We trace the fascinating origins of the zodiac in **issue 108**

Masters of disguise

Are aliens, demons and fairies separate races of paranormal beings – or are they simply the 'fashionable' masks worn by wily elementals? These intelligent creatures may have their own plans for mankind's future. **See issue 109**

Betrayed by the senses

We tell the story of Ruth, whose hallucinations were so real that she saw their shadows. Her experiences raise many disturbing questions about the nature of reality. **See issue 110**

Feeling odd at Fishpond

Strange illnesses and accidents in the tiny village of Fishpond in Dorset have been blamed on the effect of living too close to electrical pylons. We investigate the controversy in **issue 110**

Rites and wrongs

The world of ritual magic is murky with spells and curses, many of them thousands of years old. Sticking pins in wax dolls is a crude form of magical ill-wishing, but there are other, subtler ways of magically injuring enemies. **See issue 111**

The joker is wild

The return of the cosmic joker – as he hurls cooked halibuts out of the sky, chooses ludicrously appropriate names for employees on a duck farm and has a cat rescued by firemen, only for it to be run over by them immediately. More of his pranks – some amusing and some deadly – in **issue 112**

Oddities all around

Strange luminous objects swim through our oceans; sands sing, and the images of whole cities appear as mirages thousands of miles away. A look at yet more 'natural' curiosities in **issue 112**

Counting on genius

How many seconds has a man lived who is 70 years, 17 days and 12 hours old? In 1780 Thomas Fuller gave the answer in two minutes, yet he was illiterate. He is just one of the 'lightning calculators' described in **issue 113**